

2/18/25

To: Chairman Grassley and Ranking Member  
Durbin

Hello, my name is Denise Prince. Like most parents I never expected to feel the excruciating pain of losing a child. My son Joe was 27 yo and died from fentanyl and xylazine poisoning on 4-21-23. Joe struggled with the disease of addiction for half of his short life on earth. He hated the disease and fought valiantly to overcome it. He went through more treatment programs than I can count, including an out of state year long program in Austin, TX. Before he died he was considering the 2 year program at Stout Street Foundation in Colorado. I tried everything I could to help my son fight his battle, from warm fuzzy love to tough love. He had a long period of sobriety from 2019 to 2022 during which time he held a steady job, secured an apartment for he and his girlfriend and even bought a car (and he did not drive but his girlfriend did). But the disease came for him again; he spent 4 months in rehab/sober living late 2022 to early 2023. Then he found himself back at his apartment alone and without any food unable to regain his footing. I went to his apartment on 4-8-23 to take him grocery shopping and something told me to let him come home. So I brought him home that night and we spent the next day (Easter) with his little brother in Pittsburgh where he goes to college. I thank God for that day! Once home again in Hatboro Joe started attending 12 step meetings and set up intake appts for psychiatrist and therapy, his first appt was set for 4-28-23. I also took him to our local ER to get a couple of weeks of psych meds to last until his appt because Joe also suffered from anxiety and bipolar disorder 2. He spoke positively about the future saying he would like to embark on a career in computers because he likes tech and is tech savvy (and he was tired of working in warehouses). He was also hopeful he and his girlfriend would reconcile once he had some clean time. I knew my son's disease put him at risk but nothing could have prepared me for the morning I woke up 4-21-23 and could not find MY SON. I knew he had to be in the house because the deadbolts were on both the outside doors to his space and he couldn't lock them from the outside. I was perplexed until I opened the bedroom door again and looked down this time and saw my son slumped on the floor. He was ice cold and purple. I am a nurse so I knew he was gone. I have never screamed so loud in my life and I continue screaming to this day, most of the time on the inside but sometimes also on the outside. That week before his service was the hardest of my life. I didn't sleep and it was difficult to move or even to breathe. With a push from family I managed to pick out his flowers and his casket and his tomb and put together his picture boards for the service but could not bring myself to write his eulogy so I just kind of jotted some notes and verses and winged it at his service. A family member showed me a letter from one of his friends on FB talking about how much my son impacted his life and many other lives, about how Joe always made him feel included and taught him what's really important in life, especially family. It sounded like he had met my son in rehab and continued communication via social media. His letter made me cry and feel proud at the same time. He included a picture of his very young family and I like to think my son had something to do with that. Joe spent so much time in rehab that he likely had been helping his peers around him. His counselors often told me Joe was a good community member and could run the groups himself. My son didn't want to die and he didn't deserve to die. His disease of addiction tore our family apart for years but that torture can not compare to the torture I am resigned to now and I would give anything to have him and his addiction back in my life now. My son never gave up his fight against the disease of

addiction but his right to continue fighting was taken away by others when he was poisoned with illicit fentanyl and xylazine that was put into the cocaine he used to dull his pain. After finding out what killed my son I started to educate myself about this genocide and was shocked that this evil started a decade prior to my son's death. Illicit fentanyl poisoning is now the NO.1 KILLER OF AMERICANS AGE 18-45. How is this not a national emergency?! I am angry that more was not done to stop the flow of these poisons into the US and I want you to do everything you can NOW so more families do not have to suffer this unending agony. That is why I ended my social media ban and joined LVOF, INC. and attend the rally/march in DC each year and have written my lawmakers pleading for action. I have been underwhelmed by the responses, talking about mental health and addiction strategies, very important yes but will not stop the murders now. We need to do everything we can to stop the flow of these poisons into the U.S. The country needs you to pass the Halt Fentanyl Act and get it to the Presidents desk now, every minute wasted more lives are lost and more families are condemned to excruciating forever pain. Please do not delay.

Thank you!

Denise Prince

Mom to an angel son Joey, a beautiful human who loved Jesus, his family, all people and life itself.

Love Above All...1 Peter 4:8



Drug Epidemic Memorial

Joey  
Prince

Forever 27  
Fentanyl and  
Xylazine Poisoning  
Pennsylvania

